

Being Brave by [thegirlcourageous](#)

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Summary:

It's difficult to be brave, but sometimes, all you need is a little push.

Being Brave

Eddie was picking at his shirt again, his face doing that scrunched up thing that it always did when he was thinking hard about something. It never failed to make Richie want to smooth out the lines furrowing his brow. Not that he was going to, like, ever actually do that, but the impulse was there.

Forcing his eyes away, he instead focused in on the conversation again. The other Losers were all speaking excitedly about something but about what he wasn't sure. He hadn't been listening. Because even from across the room, Richie was paying attention to Eddie. He was always paying attention to Eddie.

This was the way it had always been for as long as he could remember, and Richie had finally started accepting that this was just part of who he was. He cracked inappropriate jokes and deflected like a champ...and he was in love with Eddie Kaspbrak.

That last part still made his palms sweat and his heart beat thunderously against his chest. But every day it got a little better. Every time he admitted it to himself in the privacy of his mind, the truth of the words struck him. It was scary as hell but every day it became easier to accept it. He had been so tired of hiding from it, remembered how painful it had been to push down the feelings that had grown too big to be contained in his body. His feelings had been leaking all over the place; from his fingertips, his eyes, his heart.

He was seventeen, but he'd loved his best friend for a long time. Even he himself was unsure when it had started. It had been as natural as breathing to love Eddie. So, even if he strongly doubted if he'd ever actually voice these feelings, just voicing them to himself was a huge

step. It was enough.

“What about you Richie?” A voice broke him from his reverie. Richie looked towards Bev, with what must have been a blank, confused look if the snickers from the rest of the group that reached him was anything to go by.

“Hm?” He replied, because apparently his strategy was to play dumb. When in doubt, always play dumb.

“Ever been in love?” She repeated her question, smiling. She hadn’t even said it in a mocking kind of way, but it was all Richie could hear. That she was making fun of him.

Immediately his eyes snapped over to Eddie, only to be met with unreadable eyes. Richie flushed, and looked away before he gave himself away. It was one thing to harbor feelings for your best friend, and another for him to know about them. Or for any of their friends to know.

Richie saw it happen. The smile dropped off her face, and a look of understanding seemed to pass over Bev’s features, as she too glanced over at Eddie. Richie froze, much like a deer in headlights. His eyes flicked between Eddie and Bev, trapped. This was the end. This was how his world fell apart.

But she couldn’t know. Could she? He’d been so careful.

Desperately, he tried to come up with an answer to the question before she got it in her head to revise the question, to ask another, more specific question. A question he didn't want to answer. That he wasn't ready to answer.

This, Richie reasoned, was the only reason the following word even left his mouth.

“Of course.”

Shit, where had that come from? His brain hadn't cleared that answer before his mouth said it. His mouth did not have the authorization to just casually blurt out truths left and right. Shit. He raked a hand through his hair. He blamed his slip up on the blind panic coursing through his veins. It always made him say stupid things.

His friends all stared back at him, silent.

Richie could feel his face heating up under the intense scrutiny of six pairs of eyes staring at him.

Before any of them could recover enough to actually ask a follow up question, much like it looked like Bill, and well, all of them really, wanted to do, Richie cut in with a shaky, high pitched laugh that couldn't have sounded faker if he'd tried.

“Don't say anything.” He pleaded with them.

He watched as his friends exchanged glances with each other. Saw how they all collectively decided to let it go.

In that moment, he was stupidly grateful for his friends. No one pushed it. No one said anything, even though he could tell that they wanted to. Especially Stan. He kept sending him little pointed looks, and Richie figured that Stan would probably corner him at school sometime soon. And even though the thought freaked him out, he was glad they cared.

He didn't dare look to in Eddie's direction, though. Didn't want to see what his face looked like. But he could feel his eyes on him for the rest of the night, burning.

Time passed, both faster and slower than Richie would have liked. Part of him wanted the night to never end because if there was one thing that he was sure about, it was that Eddie, unlike Stan, would want to talk to him tonight. Eddie had never been good at waiting and with the way he'd stared at Richie tonight, he knew that there was most definitely something Eddie wanted to talk about. He wasn't sure what Eddie could possibly want to say to him, but he guessed he'd find out soon enough. The other part of him just wanted to get the whole thing over with. He was tired. He wanted to go home and sleep.

As the group made their way outside to where their bikes were parked, Bev put her hand on Richie's shoulder. He glanced at back at her. But instead of saying anything in front of the others, she simply squeezed his shoulder after a long, searching look. And then she walked away.

And Richie knew that she knew.

Predictably enough, as everyone was getting on their bikes and leaving, Eddie did come up to him, but he didn't say anything. Neither of them moved to get on their bikes, instead opting to lead them. They had walk for about 10 minutes in silence when Eddie suddenly stopped. He dropped his bike to the ground, and Richie followed suit. For a long moment, he just stared down at the ground, biting his bottom lip.

Just as Richie was beginning to think that Eddie wasn't actually going to speak, a small voice said, "Do you really love someone?"

Richie's heart slammed painfully against his chest.

He wasn't ready.

"Because..." Eddie continued, but something wasn't right. His voice sounded wobbly and unsure, two words that Richie had never connected with him before right now. Because Eddie was brave, even when he was scared. So, Richie looked at him, really looked at him. And right now, he looked sad. There was no way around it. If Richie didn't know better, he'd say that Eddie looked heartbroken. But Richie did know better.

"Eds?" Richie said.

"Don't call me that." The reply was instantaneous, as was the little

glare Eddie threw his way. Buoyed by the familiarity of the exchange, Richie grinned.

A small smile tugged at Eddie's lips.

"Shut up."

Back was that swooping feeling in his stomach that was always present when Eddie smiled. When he'd made Eddie smile. It was the best feeling in the world. It always made Richie feel as if he was soaring.

He'd kept a tight lid on his feelings for such a long time, but he could feel it starting to bubble over. These feelings were much too big to contain, too big for him to ignore, too big for him not to put words to. There just wasn't enough room inside him to keep it hidden. He'd been so sure that it would be enough to just acknowledge it to himself. But he was coming to realize that hadn't been as true as he'd tried to convince himself.

However, before he could even try to muster up the nerve say anything, anything at all, before he could even take a step towards the other boy, Eddie grabbed his hand. Richie stared down at their connecting fingers, dumbstruck.

What was going on?

Eddie took a deep breath, and then, "I know that I'm too late, but I

wanted to say this because I've been thinking it for a long time, and I don't want to have never said anything at all. I don't want to have any more regrets. Maybe this is going to come as a shock and maybe I shouldn't say anything at all... You're my best friend after all and I don't want to lose you. I just... I have to try. I have to say the thing."

Richie's mind was spinning, and before he could stop himself, he breathed out, "What thing?"

Eddie looked at him, looking like he was steeling himself for... something. Richie couldn't even begin to guess what that something was, but he didn't have to. Eddie had made up his mind, Richie could tell. Whatever it was, Eddie would tell him himself. After all, Eddie had always been the brave one.

"I love you."

His thoughts screeched to a sudden halt.

What?

"What?" He said out loud, just to be sure.

"Richie, I love you." Eddie said, again. The words sounded sure, but his face was telling a different story. The strained, brittle smile Eddie had plastered on his face looked painful.

Richie gaped at him. For the first time in his life, the words left him. All the words. There were no more words.

The longer he stayed silent, the more Eddie's face fell, until he suddenly yanked his hand back. There was only one word that could accurately describe the look on Eddie's face: devastation. And Richie couldn't believe he'd been the one to put it there.

So, before he could run away, Richie reached out and grabbed Eddie's hand.

"Wait!" He almost shouted. His heart was pounding. Eddie couldn't leave like this. He had to tell him. He had to know.

"It's fine. You don't feel the same, I already know. So, can you just let go so I can go die in a hole somewhere?" The longer Eddie spoke, the louder his voice became. And the more it sounded like he was seconds away from crying.

This was the moment. Richie knew. It was now or never, he had to tell him. He had to be honest. He had to be brave too.

"Eddie—" He began.

"No!" Eddie shouted, cutting him off. "Shut up! Shut up! I don't want you to feel bad for me! I don't want your pity!" He quieted, before he whispered, pleaded, "I thought I could handle it, but I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear you reject me, please, I don't want to

know. I don't want to know who—”

Inhale. Exhale.

“I’m in love with you.”

Eddie’s head snapped up, and he was staring intently at him. A tear had broken free and was slowly making its way down his cheek.

“Yeah?” Eddie asked, nervously.

“Yeah.” Richie’s reply was steady. He wasn’t scared, not anymore. And he’d be a fool if he’d replied anything else. Instead, he reached out. He hesitated for only a moment before he wiped at the tear with his thumb.

Eddie leaned into his touch, closing his eyes. A brilliant smile lighting up his features.

Richie laughed, suddenly giddy beyond anything he’d felt before. He wasn’t alone. His feelings weren’t one sided.

At the sound, Eddie blinked his eyes open, and for a moment he simply stood there, staring at Richie.

“I like it when you’re happy.” He said finally, making Richie blush. He should have been embarrassed at the redness that was surely making him look like a tomato, but he couldn’t find it in himself to be anything but happy. Deliriously, mind-blowingly, blissfully happy.

Richie simply grinned in reply.

Eddie’s hands reached out, and then he was cupping Richie’s face in return. Slowly but surely Eddie was inching closer to him until he said in an exasperated, grumpy voice, “Why are you so fucking tall?” and pulled Richie’s face down to meet his.

Their lips touched, and yes, it was awkward and dry and Richie’s glasses got in the way and neither of them knew exactly what they were doing. But it didn’t matter, it was perfect.

Richie grinned into the kiss, and he could feel that Eddie was grinning to.

“Stop smiling, dipshit.” Eddie said.

“You stop smiling.” Richie replied.

Both of them sounded incredibly fond.

But that was ok. They were in love.

Author's Note:

The idea is to write one fic a day in December. It's going to be a personal challenge, especially as I do have a lot of stuff going on this month, but there is no time like the present and I'm excited to see what will happen. This first one isn't Christmas themed in any way BUT I'm certain others will be.

Thank you to anyone who reads this. Hopefully, they won't be total shit! :D